

## ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA

*By Frida Pliefke*

When the territory of Minnesota was organized in 1849, the region where Rochester now stands was still a camping ground for Indian tribes and fur traders. It was five years later in the early spring of 1854 that a party of United States surveyors from Winona marked the first claim on the site. The same year brought the first settlers and saw the building of a log cabin. The establishment of a stage line between Dubuque, Iowa and St. Paul contributed to the new settlement a tavern, a post office, a place on the map, and the first frontier yarn. Postmaster McReady converted his home into a tavern and carried the post office around in his hat.

Another tradition says that the new settlement was named by George Head, one of the earliest settlers, because the crooked course of the Zumbro River which divides the city and the rapids called by the Indians the Falls of Wazionja reminded him of his old home in Rochester, New York.

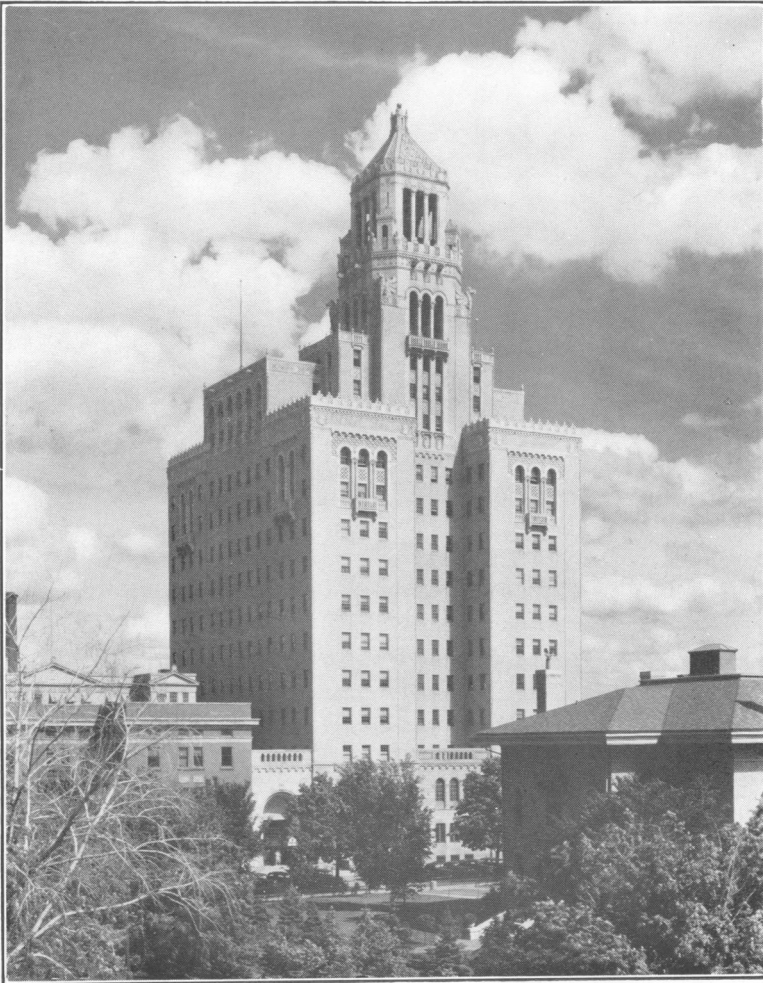


Aerial view of Rochester, Minnesota

The early history of Rochester is typical of the development of any frontier town. During the years of the westward movement the population increased rapidly. The prairie schooners bringing families from the eastern states, from Indiana and Illinois were followed by the covered wagons of German, Irish and Scandinavian immigrants. The rich farming land in the valley of the Zumbro River was soon under cultivation

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and for several decades Rochester was the busiest wheat market of southern Minnesota. Schools and churches were built; log cabins were replaced by homes and stores. By 1855 the first physician had arrived and within another year there was a pioneer druggist. In 1858, the same year that Minnesota was admitted to the Union, Rochester was incorporated as a city.



The Mayo Clinic

And so, until the memorable cyclone of 1883 the story of Rochester is the story of wheat farming in Minnesota. After that date it gradually becomes the story of The Mayo Clinic.

William Worrall Mayo came to New York from Manchester, England in 1845 and for a time taught physics and chemistry in the Bellevue Hospital Medical College. Later he went west coming first to Indiana where he took up the study of medicine. From there he went to the University of Missouri where he obtained his M.D. degree. In 1855 he moved his practice from La Porte, Indiana to the territory of Minnesota. He settled at Le Sueur and began a country practice. During the uprisings of the Sioux Indians, he accompanied Flandrau's company to New Ulm as surgeon. In 1863 following his appointment as provost surgeon in charge of recruiting stations for the Civil War he moved with his family to Rochester where he lived until his death in 1911. Here he established another country practice which he interrupted only once to take a graduate course in the Bellevue Hospital Medical College in 1871 for which he was granted an *ad eundem* degree.



Colonial Hospital

In 1877 there came to Rochester another person who was to play a leading role in its history. Mother Mary Alfred Moes was sent there from Illinois to establish a convent of the Order of St. Francis and to conduct an academy for the education of girls.

Then on August 21, 1883 a violent tornado struck Rochester, destroying three hundred buildings in a quarter of an hour, killing thirty-five persons and wounding ninety-seven. An emergency hospital was provided at the convent, with Dr. Mayo in charge, and the sisters helped to nurse the wounded.

Some time later Mother Alfred proposed to Dr. Mayo that the sisters

would open a permanent hospital if he would take the medical superintendence. As a result St. Mary's hospital was opened on October 1, 1889 with a staff of three physicians, Dr. W. W. Mayo and his two sons, William James who had obtained his M.D. from the University of Michigan in 1883 and Charles Horace who received his at Northwestern University in 1888.

Within three months fifty-nine operations had been performed and by the end of the year 300 patients had been treated. The building had been planned to include a proper operating room and adequate facilities for the care of surgical patients. It was not long before physicians from neighboring localities began to send in cases too serious to be handled at home. The work of the hospital increased steadily; in 1893 a new wing had to be added, and another in 1898.



Saint Mary's Hospital

When St. Mary's hospital was opened Dr. William Worrall Mayo was seventy years old and ready to retire from active practice. Consequently the burden of the work fell upon the two sons. From the beginning they showed a natural bent for surgery and the hospital provided plenty of opportunity for the exercise of their skill. Within five years two medical consultants were added to the hospital staff, but until 1905 the two surgeons performed all of the operations with the help of interns and surgical assistants. We must remember, too, that in these early years the Mayos were carrying on a general country practice and that they had offices in downtown Rochester. Their growing reputation attracted many visiting physicians and surgeons who began to speak of the "Mayo Clinic" as if it were an institution. The name was not generally adopted until the original Mayo Clinic building was erected in 1914.

The year 1905 initiated a general expansion of The Mayo Clinic. A third operating room was opened at St. Mary's Hospital in charge of Dr. E. Starr Judd as junior surgeon. Laboratories and roentgen-ray equipment were installed to aid in diagnosis. The period which followed marked the development of medical and surgical specialties and an increase in the work of the institution which rapidly exceeded the capacity of the building. Other hospitals and hotels were erected in the city to accommodate the influx of people. In 1926 work was begun on the present building which was completed in 1928, and which houses many special laboratories and auxiliary departments.

Young graduates of the medical schools eager for apprenticeship and specialized study were given appointments as assistants in the operating rooms, in the hospitals and in the various departments of the clinic. To provide a better form of postgraduate medical education for these young physicians, The Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research was incorporated in 1915 and affiliated with the Graduate School of the University of Minnesota. Under this arrangement approximately 1,400 students have been enrolled as Fellows up to the present time.

And what of the city of Rochester during these years? The wheat belt shifted farther west and north, and farmers turned to dairying and diversified crops. As elsewhere factories and industries have sprung up and the city has grown to a population of over 20,000. But Rochester today takes pride in being known as the "clinic city" and in keeping the latch string always out for the visitors who come there from all parts of the world.